

Prisoners in Kuwait City visited

GENEVA (AP) — Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have begun visiting detainees in Kuwait City following reports of serious human rights abuses by security forces and freelance gangs. A statement issued at the Geneva headquarters of the all-Swiss agency Sunday said the visits began Saturday at the city's military prison under an agreement reached with the Kuwaiti government. It said that in line with standard ICRC procedures, detainees will be interviewed without witness. "After the visits, a confidential report will be given to the authorities, requesting, where necessary, improvements in the detainees' treatment and conditions," it added. Middle East Watch, a New York-based human rights group, reported last week that Kuwaiti security forces and freelance gangs used lit cigarettes, knives and other instruments to torture hundreds of people suspected of collaborating with Iraqi troops after the invasion of Kuwait. Many of the detainees are reported to be Palestinians.

UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN
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DIVISION

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جورдан تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالإنجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الرأي»

Volume 16 Number 4660

AMMAN MONDAY, MARCH 25, 1991, RAMADAN 9, 1411

Price: Jordan 100 fils; Saudi Arabia 1.50 riyals; UAE 1.50 dirhams

Fahd orders end to anti-Arab propaganda

RIYADH (AP) — King Fahd Sunday ordered Saudi Arabian news media to avoid criticizing other Arabs. Information Minister Ali Al Shaer announced. In a statement to the Saudi Press Agency, Mr. Shaer said the king's decision was inspired by the current holy month of Ramadan. "All (negative) responses in the media — press, radio and television — to what is published by the Arab media in general will be ceased as of Monday, the 9th of Ramadan," said the statement. "We hope that all other Arab and Islamic media will chart the same blessed Islamic course."

4 die, 7 missing in Egyptian floods

CAIRO (AP) — Four people died and seven are missing in the Sinai Peninsula because of flash floods from two days of heavy rain, a state-run newspaper said Sunday. The Al Messa newspaper quoted Major Mohammad Khodr, chief of security in the province of North Sinai, as saying that three Bedouin shepherds were killed in the storm in addition to one motorist whose car overturned. Maj. Khodr said policemen are still searching for five missing Bedouin children and the drivers of two cars which were found buried in the mud.

Israel says 3 guerrillas killed

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli soldiers shot and killed three heavily-armed guerrillas in Lebanon Sunday about a kilometre north of the border, the military command said. It said the troops encountered the three while on "operational duty," Sunday afternoon in the southwestern corner of the so-called "security zone" in Lebanon. The soldiers "opened fire and in the exchange of fire, the three guerrillas were killed," the command statement added.

Former Iraqi envoy heads for S. Arabia

MADRID (R) — The former Iraqi ambassador to Spain, who sought political asylum after the Gulf war, left Madrid for Riyadh Sunday aboard a Saudi Arabian airiner. Foreign Ministry spokesman Juan Lena told reporters Arshad Tawfiq Ismail, who asked for asylum two weeks ago, left "voluntarily and at his own request." Earlier Spanish state radio, quoting Foreign Ministry sources, said Mr. Tawfiq intended to contact Iraqi opposition groups.

Israel questions appointment of special U.N. envoy

TEL AVIV — U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar has appointed Eduard Brunner of Switzerland to replace Gunnar Jarring as Special Representative to the Middle East. Mr. Brunner, 58, is Switzerland's ambassador to Washington, and former deputy foreign minister. The post was established in 1967 by U.N. Resolution 242. It instructed the envoy "to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the states concerned in order to promote agreement and to assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement." Israeli diplomats had feared Mr. Brunner's mandate might be expanded — as Arab diplomats requested — beyond that specified in Resolution 242 to include tasks specified in later resolutions. These included calls for a U.N. representative to deal with the Palestinian issue, and for a U.N. mediator. But Mr. Perez de Cuellar's appointment specified that Mr. Brunner would act "in accordance with Resolution 242." U.N. spokesman Francois Giuliani told the Jerusalem Post there was no expansion of his mandate. Israel's U.N. mission later issued a statement saying Brunner's appointment raised questions as to whether the representative "has a role to assume at the present time" amid U.S. efforts to work towards a Middle East settlement — The Jerusalem Post.

Shiite cleric blasts violence, but asks Saddam for amnesty

NAJAF, Iraq (Agencies) — The Muslim World's most senior Shiite scholar has again condemned a wave of killings and violence in a rebellion against the government of President Saddam Hussein — but be asked him to amnesty rebels.

A group of reporters met Grand Ayatollah Abol Qassem Al Khoi Sunday.

The group was brought to his home in Najaf, holy to Shiites, on a tour by the Information Ministry. Najaf was caught up in civil unrest which flared after the end of the six-week Gulf war.

In the southern city, ravaged by days of fighting between government troops and rebels, Ayatollah Khoi denied that he was under duress.

"I thank God there is no pressure," said the influential, 90-year-old cleric.

He added: "Now everything is finished and there is nothing. I am comfortable now and there is nothing."

An official said rioters had controlled the city for more than 10 days. Rebels had claimed that the cleric earlier issued a decree of jihad against the government from Najaf, an early centre of rebellion.

In Amman, travellers from Iraq said Ayatollah Khoi had not made any call for jihad but had set up an administration in the holy sites to bring back order after government troops lost control of Najaf.

Ayatollah Khoi last week appeared with President Saddam whom he praised for crushing the unrest in the south. "Thanks be to God, God has enabled the president to stamp out this sedition," said Ayatollah Khoi.

Neighbouring Shiite Iran, accused by Baghdad of fanning unrest, led international protests over the episode, saying Ayatollah Khoi was kidnapped and forced to make a public show of support for President Saddam. It warned Iraq without his physical safety.

But Ayatollah Khoi told reporters

on Saturday he was not harassed by Baghdad, that the killing of Muslims was against Islam and he described anti-government rioters as "groups of ignorants," for whom he sought a general amnesty.

Ayatollah Khoi, who rarely makes public pronouncements, said of his meeting with President Saddam: "We were taken to Baghdad where we spent two nights after which we returned to Najaf."

His appearance in his home town before Iraqi journalists presenting foreign organisations was evidently intended to answer accusations that he was under house arrest.

The tour also underscored government control of Najaf, as did a similar press visit last week to the other Shiite holy city of Karbala, both heavily damaged in civil strife.

Baghdad says the southern rebellion has been crushed. Similar unrest has swept the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq and opposition leaders leaders

(Continued on page 3)

Iraq says U.S. wants to rob it of sovereignty

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Baghdad accused the United States Sunday of trying to rob it of its sovereignty in a draft U.N. Security Council resolution calling for the elimination of Iraq's military power.

The U.S. draft resolution, circulated to council members on Thursday, also fixes the border between Iraq and Kuwait, sets up a United Nations observer force and demands war reparations from Iraq's oil revenues.

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) published the full text of the 12-page document, which is being discussed by the council's four

other permanent members — the Soviet Union, China, Britain and France.

The U.S. draft ceasefire resolution submitted to the Security Council... demonstrated the U.S. intent to rob Iraq of its sovereignty and to mortgage Iraq's resources," INA said.

The U.S. draft resolution, circulated to council members on Thursday, also fixes the border between Iraq and Kuwait, sets up a United Nations observer force and demands war reparations from Iraq's oil revenues.

It requires Iraq to accept the destruction and removal of its

ballistic missile systems and all "weapons of mass destruction" including chemical, biological and nuclear arms.

Commenting on the resolution, Iraq's Al Thawra newspaper, organ of the ruling Baath Party, said:

"Every paragraph and article in the draft resolution shows a clear bias and determination to intervene in Iraq's internal affairs in violation of the norms and charter of the United Nations."

"Never before has an international party presented a draft

(Continued on page 3)

All League members except Iraq attend preparatory talks

CAIRO (Agencies) — All of the Arab League's 21 members except Iraq Sunday had preparatory talks to discuss the agenda of a meeting next week of the organization's permanent representatives.

This is the first Arab League function since the end of the Gulf war and Egyptian diplomats privately expressed their content with the high level of attendance.

The war had split the Arab League in half. Egypt and Saudi Arabia led Arab states which denounced Iraq.

An Arab League foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo last September drew only 12 of the members.

This is the first meeting of the permanent representative to be held after the end of the crisis which struck the Arab World," said Assad Al Assad, interim Secretary-General of the Arab

League.

"Despite the splits created in the Arab World, the paralysis of joint action and the damage to the whole Arab Nation, the Arabs are moving and making efforts to heal the wounds," he said.

The agenda of next Saturday's meeting includes reports presented by various Arab states.

One of them is a report on halting Arab boycott to certain companies that deal with Israel. The report suggested that the companies in exchange offer to build factories and plants in Arab countries similar to those they have in the Jewish state.

Topics to be discussed in Cairo included Arab cooperation, the situation in the Israeli-occupied territories, Arab-African ties, liberation movements in South Africa and Arab-European dialogue.

An official source in Algiers said the five countries in the Arab Maghreb Union — Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia — would probably be represented by ambassadors at the Cairo meeting.

Libya brought up the extension of U.S. economic sanctions against it.

"The purpose of the meeting is just to show up, to show a willingness to try and mend what was broken," said an Arab diplomat.

"That is itself is an achievement."

"We cannot do without the Arab League. It is our symbol of liberation from foreign occupation. We cannot let it die because of splits and differences among the Arab states," he added.

The move to Cairo angered Tunisia, which at one point said it was thinking of withdrawing from league activities.

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KING HOSTSIFTAR: His Majesty King Hussein Sunday hosted an iftar at Basman Palace in honour of Lower House of Parliament members, heads of courts, heads of professional associations, information department directors, editors-in-chief and some Royal family members. The audience attended Al Maghrib prayers (Petra photo).

Highness Prince Faisal Ibn Al Hussein, Prime Minister Mudar Badran, Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid and some Royal family members. The audience attended Al Maghrib prayers (Petra photo).

Iraqi cabinet reshuffle sign of positive change—Crown Prince

ATLANTA (Agencies) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan said in a CNN television interview Sunday that Iraq's cabinet reshuffle could signal the beginning of an "evolution" in

tie, and I think the change in government is the beginning of an evolution," said the Crown Prince.

"This I think is an evolution to widen the base of participation and I think we are going to see more and more of that."

Asked about any damage to Jordan's credibility after the Gulf war, the Crown Prince said, "We were not with or against the United States, despite the perception that we were a defector... this was not our percep-

tive."

He said Jordan was preparing an official paper to explain its position and clear up any questions about its role in the Gulf crisis.

Prince Hassan said Jordan hopes for progress in Iraq.

"We do not meddle in the internal affairs of Iraq," he said.

"We fervently, passionately hope for the prosperity of the Iraqi people."

(Continued on page 5)

Israel orders 4 expulsions; ministers clamour for more

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israel Sunday ordered four Palestinian activists expelled from the occupied territories. Hardliners called for even stronger measures.

Such expulsions have drawn American and United Nations condemnation, but an Israeli foreign ministry official said the latest action was meant as a "warning" to the leaders of the Palestinian uprising.

Cabinet ministers defended the expulsion order and called for more to be banished, despite the objections of the United States.

The army announced expulsion

orders against four Palestinians from the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip allegedly active on behalf of the mainstream Fatah movement.

Hardliners called for even stronger measures.

The four men have the right to appeal to the supreme court, which has quashed only one banishment order since Israel occupied the Gaza Strip, West Bank and Golan Heights in the 1967 war.

If the orders are carried out, they will bring to 66 the number

(Continued on page 5)

Andreotti urges Israel to take first step

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Italian premier Giulio Andreotti Sunday urged Israel to take the first step towards talks with the Arabs that would guarantee the Jewish state's security and "return land for peace."

Speaking to the American Jewish Committee and other U.S. Jewish leaders, the Italian premier said a key lesson of Iraq's missile attacks on Israel in the Gulf war was that "the security of Israel is no longer merely a question of having safe borders."

Both Israel and the Arab members of the allied coalition that fought Iraq have realized this, Mr. Andreotti said. "paving the way for a more broadly based

review of the situation through negotiations and political dialogue between all the parties concerned."

"Once again, it is dialogue which must prevail over the sound of weapons and violence, and the responsibility of reopening it lies primarily with Israel, because of the leading position and major responsibility it holds," Mr. Andreotti said.

Mr. Andreotti reminded his audience of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 of 1967, and 338 of 1973 which call for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories and for peace negotiations.

"We must therefore once again

constitute the main source of support for the regime, advocated democratisation and independent development of Iraq as opposed to giving priority to Arab unity."

Mr. Andreotti's stress on "dialogue" reflects the willingness of Italy and other European countries that once insisted on a Middle East peace conference to let the United States and Israel try arranging bilateral talks between the Jewish state and its neighbours, like the Camp David accords that brought peace between Egypt and Israel.

The executive director of the American Jewish Committee,

David Harris, told the AP that he had some reservations about Mr. Andreotti's comments on border security.

"Kuwait was invaded by land, and the closer the enemy, the more accurate the missile," he said.

Mr. Harris was not enthused about the "land-for-peace" concept, but said any Arab state that sincerely wanted peace with Israel could reach an agreement and hold talks about occupied territory.

He noted that Menachem Begin's Likud government was considerably intractable and inflexible

(Continued on page 3)

The future of Baathism in Iraq depends on what happens next

War, rebellion spark debate over ideology

By Lamis K. Andoni
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

A FEW HOURS prior to the U.S. declaration of a ceasefire on March 3 the allied forces bombed the national and regional commands of the Baathist Party. The thunderous explosion destroyed the marble buildings and knocked off the statue of Michel Aflaq — the Syrian-born co-founder of the pan-Arab Baathist movement.

The attack was evidently a clear political warning to the regime and in retrospect a foretelling sign of the turmoil that post-war Iraq would go through.

But the destruction of the

Baathist Party headquarters was, in a metaphoric sense, also indicative of the questions raised in the post-war Iraq about the future of Baathism.

Many Baathists, including pro-Iraqi Arabs who live in Iraq, have always argued that Baathism — as a pan-Arab nationalist and socialist ideology — has largely contributed to maintaining a united and secular country. Some have claimed that Baathism was able to solve the question of the ethnic minorities — but the frequent re-eruption of Kurdish insurrection has repeatedly questioned such a conclusion.

But the war, and more specifically the military defeat, has sparked a debate — believed to have incited party circles

— concerning Arab nationalism and Baathism in Iraq.

The most striking aspect of

Iraqi reparations — how would it happen?

By Galina Vromen

Reuter

THE HAGUE — International legal experts are starting to grapple with the complicated mechanics of how Iraq might be made to repay the enormous damages stemming from its invasion of Kuwait.

Kuwait has already estimated its own damages from the occupation at \$100 billion. The United States and Britain have told citizens to start filing claims for damage or destruction of businesses and property.

At the United Nations, a U.S. preliminary draft resolution for a permanent Gulf war ceasefire suggests a fund be created to meet war compensation claims against Iraq. Into it would be paid an unsated percentage of the value of Iraq's petroleum exports.

A commission would be set up to administer the fund, and the U.N. secretary general would be asked to present recommendations within 30 days on ways of paying the compensation.

But the draft of the resolution obtained by Reuters is extremely complicated and likely to go through several revisions in coming weeks.

Experts are meanwhile studying reparations procedures used after World War II, and the workings of the Iran-U.S. claims tribunal in the Hague which settles financial disputes arising from the 1979 revolution in Iran.

The legal groundwork for reparations was set in U.N. Security Council Resolution 674 which holds Iraq responsible for damages stemming from its invasion of Kuwait and calls on countries to file claims for financial compensation.

"The first big question is whether an agreement will be reached with Iraq on the (process for) reparations," said lawyer

Arthur Rovine, agent for the United States when the Iran-U.S. tribunal first opened in 1981 and now in private practice in New York City.

Most experts say Iraq is in such dire straits — it was \$90 billion in debt even before the war — that it is unrealistic to expect it to pay massive reparations that could further destabilise the country.

"There may be some sort of symbolic reparations, but there is no way they will really be able to pay up," said Terry Gill, a professor of international law at Utrecht University.

If Iraq refuses to discuss any payments, the allies could use frozen Iraqi funds abroad to compensate some claimants.

Mr. Rovine said official sources had told him four to five billion dollars of Iraqi assets were frozen worldwide, about one billion dollar of that in the United States and a similar amount in Britain.

Since most of the assets are in the West, it is unlikely that citizens of other countries — particularly the many guest workers who lost their life savings — would get compensation by that route, experts said.

"Frozen assets would cover just a fraction of the claims. If we can get or impose an agreement with Iraq, more possibilities would open up," Mr. Rovine said.

With Iraq's agreement, there are several scenarios for how reparations could work.

If the U.N.-backed International Court of Justice in the Hague could be asked for an advisory opinion reinforcing U.N. Resolution 674 and on the amount Iraq should pay, said Peter Kooijmans, professor of public international law at Leiden University.

But other experts do not favour that course.

Reparation claims could be handled in bilateral negotiations

between Iraq and countries demanding compensation, probably with arbitrators from neutral nations.

Once a total sum for each country was agreed, national commissions could decide how to distribute the money among claimants. That method was used after World War II with arbitrators from neutral countries taking part.

Or the example of the Iran-U.S. claims tribunal in the Hague might be followed. The tribunal, with three central judges and three each from the two countries, allows individuals and companies as well as the two governments to bring their case.

The tribunal was set up under a treaty that freed 52 U.S. hostages in the American embassy in Tehran in 1979 and has resolved more than 4,000 cases so far, with U.S. claims being met from frozen Iranian assets.

The tribunal was started with the help of the Permanent Court of Arbitration housed in the same complex as the International Court of Justice. It could again be asked to be helped form a tribunal.

Haas Jookasmaa, secretary general of the arbitration court, while stressing that no-one had yet asked the court to help, told Reuters it could make available physical facilities, staff and expertise for setting up a tribunal or bilateral commissions.

The new situation with Iraq is far more complicated than the situation that led to the Iran-U.S. tribunal because there are more than two countries involved," Mr. Jonkman said.

Mr. Gill said the anti-Iraq coalition countries may not want a tribunal because it could put Iraqi claims for civilian damage from allied bombing on an equal footing with their own claims.

"A tribunal might just not be practical," Mr. Rovine said.

Bush says Iraqi changes show Saddam still 'calling the shots'

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. President George Bush Saturday brushed aside a government shakeup in Iraq as a move that shows Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein is still "calling the shots".

The president said the United States could not restore normal relations with Baghdad while Saddam Hussein remained in power.

"I would simply say that Saddam Hussein appears to still be calling the shots," Mr. Bush said at the White House following talks with Turkish President Turgut Ozal at Camp David, the presidential mountain retreat.

"As I have said before, normal relations with the United States cannot be effective with Saddam Hussein still calling the shots, still in power."

President Saddam appointed a 24-man government, bringing in seven new ministers and making Deputy Prime Minister Saadoun Hammadi, a Shi'ite Muslim, Iraq's prime minister — a position President Saddam had held.

Baghdad Radio reported that crowds turned out in great numbers to welcome the new prime minister when he visited towns in Southern Iraq.

Mr. Hammadi toured the provinces of Najaf and Qadissiyah, areas of post-Gulf war unrest, Baghdad Radio said. Baghdad says it has crushed the rebellion.

Mr. Bush said he and Mr. Ozal discussed the shakeup "at length" but concluded, "there are some interesting cabinet shifts, but nothing that appears to depart from Saddam Hussein's policies."

During two days of talks at

Iraqi opposition leaders in Syria scolded the new cabinet, saying President Saddam should step down "before it becomes too late."

"The revolt against Saddam will continue regardless of his false promises of Democracy and freedom," said Hassan Al Nakib, a former Iraqi general who is now a leading opposition figure.

The Bush administration has already provided Turkey with \$82 million in emergency military assistance in addition to \$53 million in the 1991 foreign aid budget. It has proposed increasing the 1992 allocation to \$703 million.

Congress Friday gave final legislative approval for an additional \$200 million to help offset Turkey's losses in the war. A White House official said Mr. Bush was expected to sign the bill that contains the aid.

The two leaders also discussed Cyprus, where Turkey has backed the Turkish Cypriot community with troops since a 1974 invasion that led to a breakaway state in the island's north.

The United States has been trying to promote a solution for the divided island, so far without success. U.N.-sponsored talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriots stalled a year ago.

Turkey has agreed in principle to allow the United States to store conventional ammunition inside its borders for use during a possible future crisis in the Middle East.

Washington has been concerned about the length of time it took to ship arms and equipment into the Gulf region to deal with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait back in August.

Prowling U.S. jets told not to shoot down Iraqi helicopters

Riyadh, (R) — American pilots patrolling over Iraq have been told not to shoot down helicopters unless they approach allied forces. U.S. commander General Norman Schwarzkopf said Saturday.

He said Iraq, battling post-Gulf war revolts, had sharply reduced the use of armed helicopters after a ceasefire meeting with allied commanders last Sunday at the Iraqi town of Safwan.

The allied commanders warned the Iraqis against using helicopters to attack rebels. Gen. Schwarzkopf's remarks to reporters indicated that the orders to U.S. pilots might change.

"The use of armed helicopters has decreased rather dramatically since the meeting we had the other day. They're using helicopters predominantly to move troops around the battlefield and that sort of thing," Gen. Schwarzkopf said.

"The armed helicopters are not going to be a threat, plain and simple," Gen. Schwarzkopf said.

"We've made it very clear to them (Iraq) that the helicopters will not fly towards, over or near our forces and they won't — nor for long."

Pressed on whether Iraqi helicopters were safe unless they approached the allies, Gen. Schwarzkopf replied:

"I can't say that. I would say that at the present time my instructions are not to take any action against armed helicopters."

"We might have to bring some logistic folks ... it's going to take a long time to get all this equipment out of here. But there's not going to be any rotation of combat forces," he said.

"One day longer is long for those kids out there in the field. They want to go home and I don't blame them — I want to go home," he said.

Washington has refused to say precisely what is forbidden.

Gen. Schwarzkopf spoke to reporters after a presenting British Gulf war commander, Lieutenant-General Peter de la Billiere, with the Legion of Merit on behalf of President George Bush.

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Hizbullah for freeing hostages if Israel releases prisoners

BEIRUT (Agencies) — The pro-Iranian Hizbullah said Sunday it was possible to work safely in northern Somalia. Its decision to leave, while pledging to return as soon as possible, was a blow to relief efforts.

"We need every human need. We have inherited nothing," said Hassan Kayd Ahdulle, SNM chief in the town of Burao, 100 kilometres south of Berbera. "We have captured nothing but destruction."

Cities like Burao and Hargeisa, the capital of the region, were once thriving livestock trading centres.

Viewed from the air, Hargeisa is now a vision of catastrophe with roofless houses stretching over the arid plain. Thousands of tonnes of tin roofing were carried away by residents fleeing the fighting.

Hizbullah is believed to be preparing movement of the extremist pro-Iranian factions that hold most of the hostages. They include six Americans, four Britons, two Germans and an Italian.

The longest held of the captives is American journalist Terry Anderson, chief Middle East correspondent of the Associated Press, who was kidnapped March 16, 1985.

"During my recent trip to Iran, I felt Iranian desire to resolve the issue of the hostages," Mr. Musawi told the AP. "I feel that they would spare no effort in influencing the groups that hold the hostages to free them."

"I also know that the Syrians have always been keen on wrapping up the hostage issue," he added.

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Jordan, Algeria agree on ways of tackling post-Gulf war issues

ALGERIA (J.T.) — The Algerian government has displayed full understanding of the Jordanian political stand vis-a-vis Arab and international issues, and Amman and Algiers have agreed on means of confronting the post-war era, according to Foreign Minister Taher Al Masri.

In a telephone call with Radio Jordan Mr. Masri, who Saturday arrived here for a two-day visit, said that the Jordanian position, which is well known to the Arab countries, has not changed and the Jordanian government advocates the idea of Arab countries embarking on preparations for the coming state.

"Jordan's position with regard to the Palestine question remains unchanged and Amman believes in the need for coordinating Arab countries stands with regard to this important issue," the minister said.

Mr. Masri had visited Libya before going to Algeria in the course of a tour of the Arab Maghreb Union countries. He said that his trip was designed to boost inter-Arab solidarity in the post-war era and to pave the

ground for the March 30 meeting at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo.

In his telephone conversation with Radio Jordan, Mr. Masri said he had discussed with the Libyan and Algerian foreign ministers the situation in Iraq, and it was agreed that the Arab states should help safeguard Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Commenting on the outcome of his visit to Libya, Mr. Masri said that Jordan and Libya have agreed on means of dealing with the coming stage. Amman and Tripoli, he said, are about to witness a new chapter in their relations based on bolstered economic and political cooperation.

The Arab League meeting in Cairo, the first to be held in the Egyptian capital after the transfer of the headquarters of the Arab League from Tunis, is expected to tackle many issues facing the Arab World in the wake of the Gulf crisis.

Following his tour in the Maghreb Union, Mr. Masri is expected to go to Yemen and Syria for similar talks.

Ship harassment still goes on in the Red Sea

AMMAN (J.T.) — A cargo vessel laden with goods imported from northern Europe has been intercepted by the naval forces of the U.S.-led alliance while on its way to the port of Aqaba and turned away back, according to an official for the Jordan National Shipping Lines.

He said that the vessel was heading from north Europe towards Aqaba carrying containers with goods imported by Jordanian merchants when it was intercepted for inspection. He said that when inspection could not be done on board, the vessel was ordered to head for Soeze in Egypt for proper inspection of the containers.

The incident, which occurred Friday, March 22, was the latest in a series of incidents in which vessels with Jordan-bound cargo were turned back and forced to

dump their shipments at Jeddah, in Saudi Arabia, or Egyptian ports where a great deal of the goods were either stolen or sold in auction without their owners' knowledge.

According to the Shipping Agents Association (SAA) in Jordan, the interception of ships is still being conducted by navy vessels from the United States, France, Spain and Greece.

SAA President Tawfiq Kawar told the Jordan Times recently that some of the containers on board vessels are normally shipped at the bottom of the hold making it impossible to be opened and the contents checked unless taken overboard for inspection.

Many vessels with Jordan-bound goods stopped coming to Aqaba Port since the start of the hostilities in the Gulf region.

JNRCS, U.S. team raise aid for Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — A team representing the U.S. Earth Steward Organisation and the Gulf Humanitarian Relief arrived to Amman Sunday on a two-week visit to Jordan, during which they will visit refugee camps in Jordan and meet with people from the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS).

The team brought in a tonne of basic medicine and a quantity of baby milk, in addition to cash assistance, which the organisation's members raised from the United States.

The team's assistance is the first shipment of aid to Jordan, which will receive further aid on a monthly basis.

Jordan is the first victim of the Gulf crisis after Kuwait and Iraq, according to reports by the Un-

ited Nations officials, who came to Jordan to ensure Jordan's observance of the U.N. sanctions against Iraq and assess the situation in the Kingdom.

In the meantime, a team from the JNRCS Sunday left for Baghdad. The team took to Iraq 43 tonnes of drugs and medical supplies as well as food donated by citizens and humanitarian organisations.

The team comprises representatives of the Gulf Peace Team, the Quakers and the Manonites.

Saturday a convoy of trucks carried 200 tonnes of food and drugs, doated by Jordanian citizens, left for Baghdad. The shipment was organised by the General Union of Voluntary Societies.

Jordan seeks new produce markets

AMMAN (J.T.) — In view of the loss of its traditional markets in the Gulf, Jordan is now looking for new markets, mainly in Europe, where to sell its agricultural products, according to Minister of Agriculture Mabarak Alawneh.

"We have been selling limited amounts of products to Europe, but this is to be increased. We have also made contacts with Iran with a view to selling its agricultural products," the minister added.

Referring to the noticeable rise in the prices of vegetables and fruits during Ramadan, the minister said that crops are now being produced during the transitional period between the winter and the summer and they are limited in quantity. In addition, he said that some people are now buying three times the amounts they used to buy before Ramadan, making it impossible for the suppliers to meet the demand; hence the rise in the prices.

Referring to the crops brought from the occupied Arab territories, the minister said that Jordan had opened the door for agricultural products from the Arab producers of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, according to the local market needs, and is allowing olive oil to pass through Jordan on its way for export to other countries.



Three days of heavy rain have turned a public park into a pool (photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

Storm, rain bring death toll to eight

AMMAN (J.T.) — The death toll from the storms and the heavy rains in the southern regions of the Kingdom Sunday rose to eight, with the Civil Defence Department (CDD) reporting Sunday that three citizens in the Karak region had drowned.

Local press reports and eyewitnesses said earlier that five people were killed and 80 others were injured as a result of landslides and road accidents as well as the collapse of bridges, mainly in the Tafileh and Karak regions which took the brunt of the storm that ended Sunday.

In the areas of Maan, Tafileh and Karak unspecified numbers of farm animals were lost and trees were uprooted as a result of the rising level of water.

Schools and community colleges as well as Mutu University, which is near Karak, remained closed Sunday while CDD teams were joined by units from the Jordanian Armed Forces in the rescue operations. Work on repairing roads, bridges and restoring water and electricity supplies was underway.

No new laws for cars of expatriates

By Nur Safi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanian expatriates and Palestinians who live in Iraq and Kuwait before Aug. 2 have had a hard time since the crisis, but exemption of taxes for customs duty on their cars has taken a load off the expatriate back.

"We have been very lucky in that aspect because, as far as I know, nowhere in the world does a country waive customs," said a Jordanian at a gasoline station in Wadi Saqa.

The customs in Jordan range from 100 per cent to up to 300 per cent of the car list price, depending on the car (engine) size.

But a Jordanian official maintained this rumor holds no ground. "Nothing new has happened. We are not forcing the expatriates to pay. If they (expatriates) decide to stay in the country, that is another matter and it becomes a national decision and the government should take a stand. But there is nothing new."

No precise figure is available on the number of cars with the Iraq-Kuwait licence plates, but one estimate put it at 12,000. Another official said there are tens of thousands of such cars.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Islamic centre honoured

AMMAN (Petra) — The University of Jordan's Documentation and Manuscripts Department has received an award from the Islamic History, Arts and Culture Research Centre in Istanbul, Turkey, in appreciation of the Jordanian centre's efforts aimed at conserving and preserving important historical documents. The director of the Islamic centre in Istanbul expressed, in a letter he sent to the director of the centre at the university, his thanks for an appreciation of the centre and voiced hope that cooperation between the two centres would be enhanced.

Sudanese honour Crown Prince

KHARTOUM (Petra) — A Sudanese doctor has set up a special medical compound, named after His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Col. Doctor Babakr Abdulrahman, who established the compound, said that Prince Hassan had made a great contribution towards establishing this compound. He added that Jordan had promised to train Sudanese cadres, who will be working at the compound. He said that the first phase of the compound was about to be completed thanks to the great support the compound executors are receiving from the Sudanese National Salvation Front, he said. Col. Babakr also said that the medical compound would perform major operations such as the removal of tumours, transplant of pacemakers, lung operations, removal of artery blockages and transplant of arteries.

Arabiyat opens Ramadan market

AMMAN (Petra) — Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Latif Arabiyat Tuesday opens Ramadan's charitable market, which will be held in the Amman International Car Exhibition hall.

JLA organises book exhibition

IRBID (Petra) — President of Jordan Library Association (JLA) Anwar Akroush Sunday opened a book exhibition organised by the JLA. The four-day exhibition is aimed at raising contributions for Iraq.

Jordan braces for resuming key role for Iraqi food imports

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The lifting of international sanctions against food exports and some other essentials to Iraq is expected to spark a run on food reserves in the Jordanian market pending the actual arrival of Iraq-bound imports, business men and officials say.

At the same time, it also means increased business for many sectors and a partial revival of the Kingdom's dormant transport sector, which was mostly dependent on Iraq's imports, business men and officials say.

A steady stream of relief supplies — food, water, medicine and fuel — has been flowing to Iraq from Jordan in coordination with international and local agencies such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent, but nowhere near the actual volume of requirements of the 18 million Iraqis.

Foodstuffs from Iran, Syria and Turkey could also be found in the Baghdad market but at very high prices. With the easing of the embargo, market prices are expected to gradually go down — one of the key priorities of the Iraqi government.

Officials, meanwhile, denied reports that Jordan had stockpiled vast amounts of foodstuff at its warehouses in anticipation of the lifting of the Sanctions.

"It is true that some items which were bound for Iraq had been kept back because of our adherence to the Sanctions Resolution, and these will be released now," said one official. But there is no truth in reports that the Kingdom's stores are full of products to be sent to Iraq."

The Sanctions Committee, in its decision Friday, lifted restrictions on essential goods to Iraq and agreed to ease the ban on fuel, generators and spare parts to repair war purification equipment, operate vehicles and make humanitarian aid effective.

The committee, however, said it would still have to be informed of food shipments but would not have to give advance approval of each consignment.

"Much depends on the attitude of the naval force in the Red Sea," he said. "They could delay shipments if they want to by raising technical questions related to the cargo. But I hope that they understand the seriousness of the situation in Iraq and act accordingly," he told the Jordan Times.

Many Jordanian importers have already established contact with European and Far Eastern suppliers for goods to be sent to Iraq. "We have given the green signal for the loading of foodstuff onto three ships at three different ports, and we expect them to dock at Aqaba by April 10," said a prominent Jordanian importer.

"Of course, we have to go by the regulations and procedures set up by the U.N. and we will be doing so," he added.

Another businessman expected the Iraqi government to act through Jordanian banks and

middlemen, in view of the freeze imposed on Iraq's foreign bank accounts and assets and of the devastation of the Iraqi telecommunications system, to get its requirements of food and other essentials.

There is no indication whatsoever of Iraq's ability to pay in cash for its imports and whether it has enough foreign exchange to facilitate imports.

In any event, much depends on how soon the U.N. moves to organise a mechanism to supervise supplies to Iraq as demanded by the Sanctions Committee.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has been spearheading the international relief effort for Iraq, said it would continue its present activities until the U.N. sets up a system in place to oversee relief supplies to the embattled country.

"We work in emergency situations as well as where nobody else is doing the job," said Werner Kaspar, the chief ICRC delegate in Amman. "There is no doubt that an emergency exists in Iraq and our traditional mission is of extending assistance to hospitals and health services."

"Our parallel effort — that of sending food, water and other supplies — will continue until the U.N. establishes its system to supervise the process," he said. "And then our focus will shift to our traditional mission."

Andreotti

(Continued from page 1)

in the 1970s, yet it signed the Camp David accords for peace with Egypt.

Egypt's Foreign Ministry issued a statement Sunday saying Israel's policy to increase settlements in the occupied territories raises doubts about the Jewish state's desire to reach a peaceful solution in the Middle East.

The statement, attributed to a responsible source at the ministry, said:

"The Israeli government's continued settlement activity will increase tension in the occupied Arab territories and undermines sincere efforts currently exerted to push forward the peace process in the Middle East."

The source was commenting on recent reports in the Israeli media that hardline Housing Minister Ariel Sharon intends to build 12,000 housing units on the occupied West Bank.

"This news makes us wonder especially because it comes at a time when all forces seeking peace are pushing for a settlement based on justice which would guarantee the Palestinian people's national rights including self-determination," the statement said.

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Egyptians continue to fight for human rights

By George Shadroui

CAIRO — If information released by the Egyptian Organisation of Human Rights is correct, Dr. Mohammed Mandour's nightmare began just before dawn on Feb. 8 when Egyptian state security officers came to his house and demanded to question him.

Over the next two weeks, Mandour was imprisoned, detained without charges, routinely tortured and threatened with death if he reported his mistreatment to the press. Mandour's only "crime" seems to have been his association with the Palestinian Red Crescent's Palestine Hospital in Cairo, where he headed the psychiatric department.

As a result of efforts exerted by the EOHR and Amnesty International, among other human rights advocates, Mandour was finally released on Feb. 23.

Mandour's ordeal is one of a series of incidents that has created grave concern in Egypt that President Mubarak's regime — particularly as a result of tensions in the Gulf — is growing increasingly repressive.

In addition to the detention and torture of Mandour, the EOHR, whose 1,000 plus members cover the political and ideological spectrum, cites the government's response to

student protests at Cairo University.

Thousands of students were protesting the American-led ground war on campus when government troops, using plastic bullets, opened fire. Local papers reported that one student was killed. The EOHR says it has the names of four victims. In either case, it was the first time in more than 40 years that the government used live ammunition against students, said Bahy Al Deen Hassan, general-secretary of the EOHR.

The EOHR also charges Egyptian security forces of systematically arresting and torturing Muslim fundamentalists, journalists, Palestinians and human rights advocates, with a recent emphasis on those who opposed Egypt's participation in the Gulf war.

Ironically, such actions have been taking place at a time when much has been made of Egypt's movement towards greater freedom and democracy. Under the Mubarak regime, opposition parties and the press have been allowed to criticise the government openly (provided they do not attack Mubarak directly). The dismissal of the previous minister of interior, the controversial and brutal Zaki Badr, brought a sigh of relief from many in Cairo.

Egypt's recent elections were widely perceived as the freest ever held in the country.

While many attributed this "freedom" to the boycott of the elections by major opposition groups, they nevertheless hoped it was step towards more genuine democracy. As if to underscore that hope, Mubarak was named the winner of a prestigious French human rights award a month later.

One of the most troubling aspects, Hassan said, is that the circumstances under which force or torture are used seem to be broadening. Mandour, a member of EOHR's board of trustees, has never advocated violence or challenged the government, Hassan said. And not even when his regime was rocked by protests at Cairo University in the late 1960s did Gamal Abdul Nasser, Egypt's charismatic president of the 1950s and 1960s, allow police to use lethal force against students.

"This is a critical moment in Egypt," Hassan said. "What will happen in the next weeks or months, I don't know. I hope the situation will improve."

Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a sociologist at the American University in Cairo and a long-time observer of Egypt's political and human rights development, said it is in times of great stress that the government overreacts.

This was the case towards the end of the Gulf war and in

October after the assassination of Rifat Al Mahgoub, speaker of parliament. But he added that Egypt still compares favourably with most other countries in the region.

"You don't have executions or people disappearing," he said. "Egypt by Middle East standards seems alright. But by my own standards as a human rights advocate, it leaves a lot to be desired."

The methods of torture are gruesome and extremely painful for the victims. Beatings with whips and sticks are common.

Prisoners are subjected to electric shocks on sensitive parts of the body. Some have been strapped to an arroza — an Egyptian cross — and then beaten. Others have had their hands and feet tied behind their backs only to be suspended in doorways until they lose consciousness.

Mandour himself was subjected to repeated beatings and electric prods applied to his sexual organs. A lawyer for EOHR who was finally allowed to visit Mandour said there were black spots caused by electricity on parts of his body. His head also had been shaved.

Interrogators repeatedly questioned Mandour about possible links to Palestinian leaders and groups, according to information released by the EOHR. Dozens of other pris-

oners, including journalists who opposed the Gulf war, are being held without charges. All of this occurs even though Egypt is a signatory to several international conventions and resolutions prohibiting torture.

The EOHR, which has also sharply criticised opposition groups that advocate or incite violence, argues that the government can maintain security and enforce the law without resorting to methods that have become all too common since Mubarak took power in the wake of President Sadat's assassination in 1981. Even women and children have been victims of beatings and psychological terror.

To the government's credit, Hassan said, the EOHR has been allowed to hold press conferences and to level charges in the press. In addition, the government has promised to establish direct channels of communication between the ministry of interior, which is responsible for state security, and the group.

But one Egyptian human rights advocate, who asked not to be named, said there is widespread fear that the minister of interior has lost control of elements in the state security apparatus, the implication being that the controversial policies are directed from inside the executive branch — by people close to the president himself — Middle East Times.

Baathism

(Continued from page 1)

against U.S. and Western targets.

The military defeat seems to have also strengthened arguments by the traditional opponents of pan-Arab nationalism. These opponents, however, are not well organised and they are not expected to join any anti-regime coalition unless they feared that the alternative will be a conservative religious and sectarian regime, according to political observers.

There are no clear indications yet that views against Baath involvement in pan-Arab affairs have influenced the leadership's line. But, as one official says, it will be difficult for the leadership to rally support for a pan-Arab cause where Iraq would have to pay dearly.

Dr. Hammad's line seems to be different as he reportedly believes that Baghdad should not compromise its pan-Arab positions even if it could not be forceful in promoting it. "This stage warrants flexibility and we have to depend on diplomacy instead of violence," said one well-placed Baathist official.

Senior party officials are said to be very disappointed in the performance of many party members during the war.

Veteran Baathists, some of

whom have stayed away from the government apparatus as an expression of disillusionment, are now seen as important assets to be recruited to revitalise the party. Some are outside the country and others are sitting at home watching their ideals being torn apart, according to one of them.

But one such veteran Baathist said that he was ready to get involved in party activities again if that would contribute to saving Iraq and preventing "a puppet pro-U.S. regime" from taking over.

"We all have to contribute to the reconstruction of Iraq. But firstly opportunists and unqualified corrupt operators and officials should be removed or else there is no place for any decent people in the system," said the prominent writer, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The writer has just returned from a several-week stay in Iraq to cover the war and its aftermath.

Jordan Times
Tel: 667171

Prince

(Continued from page 1)

He said Iraq suffered 100,000 military casualties and an unknown number of civilian casualties in the war.

Hamami urges conference

In Washington, Jordan's Ambassador Hussein Hamami Sunday stressed the need to step up efforts to find a peaceful settlement of the Middle East problem.

In a meeting with the Writers Association in Washington, Mr. Hamami called for holding an international peace conference on the Middle East, attended by all parties to the conflict.

Mr. Hamami expressed amazement at the belief that Jordan's stand on the Gulf crisis was contrary to peace when the Kingdom was working out a peaceful solution since the onset of the crisis.

"I'm really at a loss to understand why our attitude is contrary to peace," he said. "The thrust of our effort in the Gulf had been to achieve a peaceful settlement between Iraq and Kuwait; and we had it in our band in the first 48 or 72 hours, but we were blocked."

"Now it may be too early to go into the details of what happened... it will come out clearly and we will be proven right that had we been allowed the opportunity to bring about that peaceful settlement, then the suffering of the Iraqis, the suffering of the region and the potential destabilisation... would have been avoided," he said.

Expulsions

(Continued from page 1)

of Palestinians expelled from their native land since the start of the uprising.

The Palestinians served with expulsion orders have been imprisoned for ordering and committing anti-Israeli "violence," the army said.

It said they were not directly involved in recent stabbings, but Defence Minister Moshe Arens accused them of inciting the atmosphere "that leads to the end to murder."

Their lawyer, Abdul Rahman Abu Nasser, said he would appeal the order Monday before a military review committee.

If turned down, the Palestinians can then appeal to Israel's supreme court. The high court has never overturned an army expulsion order.

The orders and growing violence were discussed for two hours at the weekly cabinet session.

Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan told reporters that Arab guerrillas should be executed, their homes torn down and their families expelled.

Another minister, Rehavam Zeevi, demanded a sweeping and permanent curfew throughout the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. He said such a curfew was imposed during the Gulf war, and during that time were no killings.

Police Minister Roni Milo has proposed barring unmarried Palestinians from Israel, since most of the killings have been committed by Arabs without wives and children. Mr. Zeevi

International organisations team up to alleviate suffering of war victims

By Saeda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — "War is filthy, declares Michel Shroeder, press officer of the International Committee of the Red Cross. "There can be no humanitarian considerations in times of war, and it would be very difficult to render judgments on governments' violation of humanitarian rights."

Since the eruption of the Gulf crisis, more than 900,000 persons have been repatriated through Jordan, mostly by the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), but also by other humanitarian organisations, in addition to all Jordanians and other nationals who came back using their own means of transportation.

Humanitarian organisations have participated in helping Jordan following the government's appeal for international help. Their number at present exceeds 45, between local, international and non-governmental organisations.

They are Jamal Abu Habel, 33, Muein Msalam, 31, and Hashem Ali Dahlan, 31. All are from the Gaza refugee camp of Jabalia. The fourth, Jamal Abu Jadyan, 33, of the Gaza town of Beit Lahiya, recently completed a 10-year prison sentence for planting bombs in the Israeli port of Ashdod.

Arab sources identified Mr. Habel as a grocer, married with four sons. Mr. Dahlan, married with two children, worked for the U.N. Relief and Works Agency.

Although all camps have been set up by various organisations expecting an enormous influx of evacuees, at present only 1,007 evacuees are in Jordan. International agencies, however, say they will still be "waiting" for new arrivals.

"We are still on alert for a possible influx," said Alfred Kotek, IOM's (International Organisation for Migration) director in Jordan. "We will definitely wait for a couple of weeks to see how the situation develops."

Among the remaining evacuees are 361 Somalis who have been waiting in Jordan since August due to instability in their home country.

"We have received reports that the situation in northern Somalia is calm at present," said Janvier de Riedmatten, chief officer of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees).

In fact, we have made sure, by a survey carried out on the Somalis left, that more than 200 desire to go back to their country. The others will join their families in other countries."

Senior United Nations officials confirm that, despite the fact that they cannot interfere in such a situation, they have taken initiatives and submitted reports to the secretary general on the actual ill-treatment and killings of Palestinians in Kuwait. However,

"the Kuwaiti government is not in position to control the situation," ICRC Shroeder said. "I think that the United States along with France and England are the ones who can put an end to this torture."

Shroeder said: "The absence of any supra-government to assess the amount of violation of humanitarian rights make it difficult to force governments to implement international law. It would be difficult to know the extent of abuse inflicted on innocents. It is war and war is filthy."

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Seles downs Sabatini to win International Players tournament

KEY BISCAYNE, Florida (Agencies) — Second seed Monica Seles of Yugoslavia further solidified her world number one ranking Saturday when she disposed of third seed Gabriela Sabatini 6-3 7-5 to win the women's singles final at the International Players Tennis Championships.

Australian Open champion Seles managed to hold off the surging Argentine by taking seven of the final eight games to avoid a third set in the punishing 93 degree Fahrenheit (30 Centigrade) heat and high humidity.

"I definitely didn't want to go for a third set because I was very tired," said Seles who ended Steffi Graf's record 186-week run as world number one earlier this month.

"It was so hot out there I think the air just stopped," added Seles, who collected \$12,500 for successfully defending her title here.

It was her victory in this tournament last year that began a remarkable string of six consecutive titles that vaulted Seles to prominence in 1990.

But Seles was not about to predict a repeat of last year's heroics.

"To win six tournaments is too much pressure," she said. "Even now I look back and six tourna-

ments in a row is just... phew."

In the upset-riddled men's draw, 13th seed Jim Courier faces unseeded David Wheaton in an all-American final.

The 46th-ranked Wheaton single-handedly knocked out both of last year's men's finalists when he upset defending champion Andre Agassi in the fourth round and stunned top seed Stefan Edberg in Friday's semifinals.

While Saturday's women's final did not resemble the five-set marathon struggle between Seles and Sabatini in November's Virginia Slims championships final, the one hour 51 minute match left both combatants exhausted.

Seles controlled the first set from the baseline after both players traded early service breaks.

The 17-year-old Yugoslav used her powerful two-fisted ground strokes to break Sabatini a second time for a 4-2 lead.

The second seed then fought back from 0-4 to hold for 5-5 and served out the set with a second set break.

"I don't know what happened out there," she said. "I was a little lucky, I think."

"I was just gasping for air but at 4-2 I said 'this is a big chance, go for it.'

Meanwhile Steffi Graf will renew her quest to regain the world number one ranking Monday after accepting a late wild card entry into the U.S. Women's Hardcourt Tennis Championships.

Graf, whose record 186-week hold on the top ranking ended when Yugoslav Monica Seles ascended to number one earlier this month, won the hardcourt

championships here in 1988 and 1989.

Seles won that fifth game and stormed back to 5-4 as Sabatini's fatigue became more apparent.

The Argentine squandered six set points as she paced the baseline in an attempt to regain her breath, but was unable to produce a winning shot.

Seles levelled the score 5-5 and broke Sabatini for a third time in the set for 6-5.

The final game was a struggle for both players as Seles fought off two break points and was unable to close out the match until her fifth match point.

"I just felt like I couldn't win the big points" said Sabatini, who earned \$56,250 as runner-up.

Seles was surprised by her second set come-back.

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After long slump

Syria's economy improves

DAMASCUS (AP) — Visitors to Damascus these days no longer need to bring Syrian friends rolls of toilet paper as gifts because they were scarce.

The rolls are on sale at most stores — a mark of how Syria's economy, on the rocks until recently, is improving by the day and looks set to get healthier, although experts note that Syria still has problems to overcome.

Syrian economists and Western diplomats say the improvements are mostly the result of a decision to liberalise Syria's socialist economy, an increase in Syrian oil production, aid from Western and Gulf countries and more trade of smugglers.

A big hike in Western and Arab assistance, cut off for years because of Syria's radical policies, is expected because of Syrian President Hafez Assad's decision to support the anti-Iraq coalition which liberated Kuwait.

"The Syrians intend to exploit their new-found respectability to the hilt," analyst Charles Snow wrote in the respected Middle East Economic Survey.

Britain, which recently restored relations with Damascus after a 4-year break, has stopped blocking European Community aid to Syria and talks are expected to begin soon on loans worth some \$200 million.

Damascus restaurants now boast longer menus with food

items like "filet au Roquefort or chicken Marsala," dishes that were a rarity two years ago because cooks depended on ingredients smuggled from neighboring Lebanon.

Some groceries have run out of shelves to store their local, imported and smuggled goods.

In most countries, none of this would cause anyone to blink. But in a country where only two years ago a box of salt was a luxury, such developments are.

"During my five years here I've never seen the stores so full," said a Westerner, who like other sources spoke on condition of anonymity.

The centralised control of the economy has hindered the Syrians' deep-rooted entrepreneurial skills and left the country with a deficit estimated at \$15 billion.

No official figures are available for Syria's foreign debts. But Damascus is believed to owe the West an estimated \$1 billion and the Soviet Union around \$11 billion, most of it for arms purchases to achieve "strategic parity" with Israel.

"Our aim is to open more and more doors... to lift restrictions and give more economic freedom so that the individual would feel that he can practise all kinds of economic activity with the minimum of restrictions," said Mohammad Imady, the minister for economy and foreign trade.

But the U.S.-educated minister admitted that it was not easy to introduce change in a country that has been the Soviet Union's protege for more than three decades.

A Western diplomat said that Imady would like to speed up the liberalisation process.

"But that's impossible for now. His approach is Western while most of his colleagues have graduated from Moscow," he said.

Still, Imady boasted that the measures the government introduced two years ago are paying off and said Syria's balance of payments registered surplus of 20.6 billion Syrian pounds for 1990 as opposed to a 1987 deficit of 12.7 billion pounds.

There are four sets of exchange rates in Syria. The official rate at 11.2 to the dollar, the encouraging rate at 20, the tourist rate at 40 and the black market at 47.

One Western diplomat noted that the surplus being quoted was artificial.

"It's just too paper because the 1989-1990 balance of payments includes exports to the Soviet Union for which Syria did not get paid because it was paying off its debt to the Soviet Union," he said.

Imady said private sector exports jumped from 3.37 billion pounds in 1987 to 21.1 billion pounds last year in response to

new incentives for exporters and the industrial and agriculture sectors.

He said the private sector has been allowed to import subsidised items such as sugar, tea and coffee — which sell for up to seven times the subsidised price on the open market — and pay for the goods in hard currency from overseas bank accounts.

In addition, exporters can now keep 75 per cent of the profit they make in hard currency and can use the money to import specific items or exchange it at the tourist rate of 40 pounds to the dollar.

Imady said that in addition to improving the economy, the new measures helped Syria absorb the Gulf war-related losses in remittances from Gulf states and tourism.

He estimated these losses at \$15.7 billion. But Western diplomats put the figure at closer to \$2 billion.

One diplomat said the losses were offset by the rise in oil prices during the war and the infusion of aid for aligning against Iraq, its main Arab rival.

Syria has recently received an estimated \$3 to \$5 billion in aid from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Japan and Western Europe.

There are no official published figures for Syria's oil production, but diplomats estimate it at 400,000 barrels a day.

Kuwait issues new dinar at par with old currency

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait began issuing its new dinar Sunday at par with its old currency, setting the same exchange rate as on the eve of the invasion, central bank governor Sheikh Salem Abdul Aziz Al Sabah said.

The central bank set the new dinar at a middle rate of 0.28750 to the dollar and Sheikh Salem said the exchange rate would continue to be based on a basket of currencies reflecting Kuwait's main trading and financial partners.

He said the bank would try to hold the exchange rate steady for the first two months unless there was overwhelming market pressure.

"We will try our best for the first two months not to move our rate as before on a daily basis, unless the movement is quite sufficient (large)," he told Reuters in an interview.

The central bank would allow commercial banks to issue uncommitted letters of credit for the commercial sector to import goods, he said.

Private cash withdrawals would be limited to 4,000 dinars per resident per month for the first three months, but the restrictions might be eased sooner, he said.

Transfers abroad by private individuals would also be limited to equivalent of 4,000 dinars per month at prevailing exchange rates.

Sheikh Salem said the limitations did not apply to cooperative societies and companies with

administrative expenses to meet.

He said the aim of the restrictions was to control the volume of cash in circulation to avoid inflation, to prevent a liquidity squeeze on the banks and to ensure Kuwaiti banks did not come under immediate pressure for foreign currency while they were finalising settlements with foreign banks.

Holders of Kuwaiti dinars abroad could take the money to Kuwaiti or correspondent banks and apply for approval to convert the money into new dinars.

Oeoe approved the money would be deposited in a special account at a Kuwaiti bank and would be subject to the same restrictions on withdrawals and overseas transfers.

Sheikh Salem said holders of old dinars had six months to convert their money to new dinars.

He said the restrictions on withdrawals and transfers were imposed for a minimum of three months but he hoped they could be relaxed sooner.

Hundreds of Kuwaitis queued to change old money for a new, post-invasion currency when banks opened Sunday for the first time since the Iraqis withdrew a month ago.

Men in traditional flowing robes and chequered headresses and a few women swathed in black began lining up outside banks in war-ravaged Kuwait

City an hour before they opened. The banks issued new dinars to replace banknotes in circulation before Iraq invaded Kuwait in August last year.

The change is intended to invalidate hundreds of millions of dollars of Kuwaiti dinars taken by the Iraqis during the seven-month occupation.

The crowd surged forward when the wooden doors of the main branch of the National Bank of Kuwait in the downtown financial district swung open at 10 a.m. (0700 GMT) but guards allowed only about 20 customers at a time to enter.

"Everyone is in a rush to finish his transaction. Otherwise there are no problems," Hanan Hussein, the bank's executive manager, told Reuters.

Business appeared relatively orderly but slow. Many banks, largely undamaged in the occupation, did not have computer systems operating because there is no mains electricity and had to laboriously check written ledgers.

Qattan said some of this money, Civil servants had been paid with it during the Iraqi occupation and some Kuwaitis received it in payment for goods which they sold, he said.

Some residents were anxious to withdraw money to leave Kuwait, devastated by the war and still without water, electricity and public services in most areas.

Bank officials said there were many requests to buy dollars but none were immediately available.

Asked if the bank would accept dollars in exchange for dinars, one branch manager said: "Who in his right mind would want to change dollars for dinars today?"

Striking miners resist Soviet prime minister's call to work

MOSCOW (R) — Striking Soviet coal miners from Siberia to the Polish border said Sunday they were standing firm, showing no signs of giving in to the prime minister's request they return to work to save the sinking economy.

Miners' leaders in the big Siberian Kuzbass and Ukrainian Donbas coalfields said they are unimpressed by Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov's warning that the strikers were setting the tottering economy back "several years."

And they dismissed suggestions the miners were being manipulated by outsiders, an implied swipe by Pavlov at popular Boris Yeltsin and others who have sup-

ported strikers' demands for the resignation of President Mikhail Gorbachev.

"The general mood is to stand firm," said Viktor Osovsky, a member of the strike committee in the Donbass, where miners at about 60 pits have downed tools.

The independent Postfactum News Agency said miners in more than 165 pits, from Sakhalin in the far east to the western Ukraine, remained on strike at the weekend. Mines inside the Arctic circle and in the Urals heartland were also closed.

Pavlov Popov, a member of the Kuzbass strike committee, said the strike was holding across Siberia, adding that Pavlov's charges of outside interference ignored the democratic elections of mine leaders.

"Pavlov wants to change those strike committees ready to hold out with puppet committees who will do what he wants," Popov said.

The prime minister told Soviet television Saturday that continuing the strike, which broke out on March 1, would mean "that all of us, including the miners, will have to work for several years to repair the damage."

He said Soviet industry was receiving only 220,000 of the 340,000 tonnes needed daily to operate efficiently. "I would like to ask them to resume work by Monday at the latest."

But Kuzbass strike leader Popov said miners in the Siberian fields rejected Pavlov's assertion

they were to blame for economic hardships.

"If he is going to calculate, let him calculate properly," said Popov from the Kuzbass centre of Kemerovo.

"He should take the average miner's pay in the United States and then pay us the difference for the last 70 years. That would be the proper calculation," he emphasised.

Miners are among the best paid of Soviet industrial workers, but standards of living are appalling and work conditions are extremely dangerous at most mines.

The strike has caught the Kremlin off-balance as it tries to juggle exploding ethnic tensions and separation in the republics and economic collapse across the country. Several vague attempts at negotiations have ended in failure.

And it has highlighted the chasm between Gorbachev and Russian President Yeltsin, once his protege but now his greatest rival.

"They accuse me of supporting the strikers, but what (else) could I do? The strikers have political demands, the resignation of Gorbachev," Yeltsin told workers at the giant Kirov works in Leningrad Friday.

Hundreds of workers jammed into the hall responded by chanting "down with Gorbachev" and "resign, resign."

Last month, the Russian leader demanded Gorbachev's resignation and accused him of deceiving the people.

Oman ready to cut oil output if OPEC asks

DUBAI (R) — Independent oil producer Oman is ready to cut crude output to help raise prices if OPEC asks, Oil Minister Said Ben Ahmad Al Sibani said in remarks published Sunday.

If OPEC (Independent Petroleum Exporting Countries) is asked by OPEC to contribute in oil market stability by cutting oil production, Oman will support such a move," Sibani was quoted as saying by the Times of Oman daily newspaper.

Oman, the de-facto leader of the IPEC group — which brings together around 14 independent oil producing states — pumps around 700,000 barrels per day of crude oil.

The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) agreed earlier this month to cut the group's total output by five per cent in the second quarter to avoid a fall in prices due to a glut in the market.

A news release issued March 12 after OPEC's ministerial meeting committee said "the organisation calls upon other oil exporting countries to also shoulder similar responsibility by proportionally reducing their production levels."

Some members of the IPEC met with OPEC officials before OPEC's March 11 ministerial meeting.

IPEC's next meeting will be held in Cairo at the end of May.

Mounting subsidies expected to swell China's budget deficit

BELJING (R) — Mounting hills to bail out inefficient industry, subsidies consumers and beef up defence will mean another big budget deficit for China next year, economists have said.

Then said the budget for calendar 1991, to be presented to parliament this week, would probably show a shortfall over the 8.9 billion yuan (\$1.7 billion) deficit estimated for last year.

The 1990 deficit is likely to surpass the budgeted figure, they added.

"There is no question there will be another big deficit next year," said a finance ministry official who asked not to be named. "Revenues will fall well short of spending."

A deficit in 1992 would be the sixth in a row and the 12th in the past 13 years.

The shortfall is even bigger by International Monetary Fund calculations. Under China's quirky accounting practices, some foreign and domestic debt is treated as revenue, and last year that trimmed 33 billion yuan (\$6.3 billion) from the deficit.

China has been forced to earmark one third of all spending to maintain its woefully inefficient state industry and subsidise food, housing and other costs for workers. That percentage is expected to climb.

"We have had very little success in checking the rise in subsidies between of the need for social stability," said the official.

China was tried to keep inflation in check, partly out of fear of renewed unrest like the street protests that were crushed by the army on June 4, 1989. Those protests were aimed at speeding

political reform but surging prices in 1988 and 1989 contributed to the unrest.

Economists have said Beijing was buying social stability with subsidies.

"The figure to watch is the subsidies," said a Western economist, noting that a sluggish economy has increased this already heavy burden.

Many state-run firms are technically bankrupt, unable to meet payroll or pay taxes.

"The problem is, how do you collect taxes from companies that are losing money?" said a foreign diplomat. "There is nothing to collect."

China's economy went into a tailspin early this year as industrial credit was choked off to slow inflation. Banks have since pumped more money into the economy but consumers are still reluctant to spend their cash.

"Production is up but it's not being sold," said the diplomat.

Finance Minister Wang Bingqian has signalled that Beijing would boost spending on defence as well as agriculture, education and science and technology this year.

"The generals are looking for more money to improve their weapons," said a source with close ties to the military. "There will also be a push to boost spending on the navy, which has been neglected in the past."

Last year the military won a 15 per cent rise in spending to 29 billion yuan (\$5.7 billion), according to the budget. Military specialists said much of China's defence spending was not included in the publicly announced figure.

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Opposition reports 80 dead in Mali clashes

BAMAKO (R) — More than 80 people have died in clashes between pro-democracy demonstrators and security forces in Mali, according to opposition and hospital sources who said Sunday that people were being killed indiscriminately.

The clashes which began Friday are the bloodiest since a wave of pro-democracy fervour swept Africa last year. They pose the most serious challenge to the one-party government of President Moussa Traore.

The pro-democracy forces, a loose coalition of students, professionals and civic leaders, planned a rally Sunday morning in the capital Bamako.

Dembia Diallo, head of the Malian Human Rights League, said at least 80 people had been killed.

"That's the number we've counted so far but we'll never have to find lots of the bodies," he said.

Geneva talks to raise plight of unwanted Vietnamese boat people

GENEVA (R) — Informal talks open in Geneva Monday on the plight of tens of thousands of Vietnamese boat people no country wants to take in.

Refugee officials said the two-day, 13-nation meeting would pave the way for a full-scale conference on how to send home an estimated 110,000 Vietnamese languishing in South East Asian camps after trying to find a better life abroad.

Most are deemed economic migrants rather than political refugees and do not qualify for resettlement in Western nations. The officials said no decision was expected on whether to bow to pressure from Hong Kong and go ahead with forced repatriation. The United States is steadily

a wounded relative at the hospital said the shooting was random and indiscriminate. "I was just crossing the road and they just shot at me," she said.

The government has declared a state of emergency and imposed an overnight curfew. It has also said a congress of the ruling Democratic Union of Malian People will open as scheduled Thursday.

Traore has said the congress will consider demands for multi-party democracy, but many Malians doubt he is sincerely open to change.

The clashes have caused widespread destruction in the dusty capital. Vandals have looted luxury stores and protesters have sacked some government offices.

Senegal suspended train services Sunday between Dakar and Mali because of the unrest. It said the service would not resume until calm was restored.

A woman who was shot in the foot while she was walking to see

It failed in its goal of discouraging further emigration from Vietnam.

But screening under the Geneva agreement has made it far harder for migrants to qualify for resettlement.

Diplomats said the meeting was called by Britain, Canada and Australia to drive home the message that those not recognised as genuine political refugees would eventually have to go home.

"There is a widespread notion among camp populations that the resolve is weakening and that their chances of reaching the promised land are improving," one refugee official said.

S. African weekend township death toll reaches 17

JOHANNESBURG (R) — At least 17 people were killed in sporadic fighting at the weekend between rival black political factions in two Johannesburg townships, police said Sunday.

Residents of Alexandra, a shanty town of 200,000 people, reported hearing gunfire overnight around the township's migrant workers' hostel, scene in recent weeks of bitter conflict.

A police spokesman said 12 people had been killed in Alexandra since Friday night, three of them in a shootout and five more hacked and stabbed to death. He gave no details of the other three.

In Tembisa township northeast of Johannesburg, the bodies of two people who had been stabbed and hacked to death were found near a workers' hostel. Police had earlier reported three deaths from the area.

Security forces put up razor wire around the men-only hostel to try to separate rival factions.

The government has imposed a curfew on three Johannesburg townships to contain the warfare between Zulu migrant workers who support the Inkatha Freedom Party of chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and township residents loyal to Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC).

Alexandra's Mayor Prince Mokoena told the Johannesburg Sunday Times that the fighting in his area started when a township resident killed a Zulu after fighting over a woman.

"The Xhosa man killed the Zulu with the help of his friends ... when the Zulus heard that, the whole hostel came down and that's how it all began," said Mokoena, who is accused by the ANC of being an Inkatha sympathiser.

Residents at Akkairappattu, a predominantly-Muslim farming village 240 kilometres from Colombo, said part of the market was ablaze after the bomb blasts.

"Most people had gone to the market after starting the daily fast for the holy month of Ramadan," one man said by telephone.

Shops closed and people stayed indoors after the incident. Tension was high and police and army officers patrolled the streets.

A spokesman for the main-

Albania prepares for 1st free elections in 45 years

TIRANA (R) — Albanians face a bewildering political novelty this week as more than 1,000 candidates and six parties campaign in the first multi-party elections after 45 years of Communist rule.

The polls on March 31 will be a watershed in a year of sweeping change in the Balkan state as it emerges from decades of isolation imposed by late Stalinist leader Enver Hoxha.

The main contest looks set to be between the three-month-old Democratic Party and the (Communist) Party of Labour.

Few people are willing to forecast the result.

"Albania is quite unpredictable — there has been no history of free expression here, and this makes a tremendous difference between us and most of the other East European countries," one Albanian journalist commented.

"It seems there are many people who might vote for the Democrats, but they are not actually saying so."

The Democrats apparently enjoy support in towns but farmers in the countryside have gained by recent moves by Communist President Ramzi Alia to give them small parcels of land.

The Communist Party, which under Hoxha broke foreign relations, crushed religion and political dissent and even banned men from wearing beards, has introduced cautious reforms in the face of unprecedented protest and tried to revamp its image.

A meeting of some 200 Communist leaders Saturday called for "all-round renovation of the party so that it keeps pace with the times."

It also urged members to go out and canvass electoral support — a novelty for party supporters accustomed to more than four decades of one-party rule.

Although a party meeting in December pledged continued loyalty to Marxist ideals, Albanian journalists say the Communists seem to have deliberately avoided mentioning Marxism in their pre-election statement.

The Democratic Party, founded in mid-December by leading intellectuals, claims a membership of 100,000 which it says is about 20,000 less than the Communists.

The Democrats clearly enjoy large support in towns particularly Tirana, where hundreds of people mill in and out of the dilapidated villa which became their headquarters last month.

"The Party of Labour doesn't have such a centre of activity," one student commented.

Moderate quake shakes northern California

WATSONVILLE, California (AP) — A moderate-sized earthquake struck late Saturday in the same area devastated by a much larger quake two years ago, but there were no reports of injuries or serious damage.

The quake, which struck about 7:12 p.m. local time (0312 GMT), measured 4.8 on the Richter Scale of ground motion and was centred three miles (1.8 kilometres) northeast of Watsonville, which is about 70 miles (112 kilometres) south of San Francisco, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) officials reported.

Previous reports of a second, 1.2-magnitude tremor about an hour later were incorrect, said Allan Lindh, a seismologist with the USGS. He attributed the error to confusion over the time zone difference between California and Colorado, where the USGS survey office is located, and to different recording methods used to measure the size and location of earthquakes.



Identity mix-up costs baby's life

BANGKOK (R) — A case of mistaken identity at a Bangkok hospital led to the death of a two-month-old baby police said was murdered by a woman who thought it was hers. Somsri Chanthoh, 20, was given the wrong baby when she went to Bangkok's Children's Hospital early this month to collect her own daughter who was being treated there, police said Sunday. Somsri, a shoe factory worker, did not realise the hospital's mistake and later suffocated the child, stuffed her body into a bag and abandoned it in bushes near a suburban housing estate. Police said Somsri, who has been charged with deliberate homicide, told them she killed the baby on March 6 because she was too poor to raise her. The mix-up was discovered when the real parents of the murdered girl reported it to hospital authorities, who informed police Friday. The hospital has set up a committee to investigate allegations of negligence against two nurses.

Hillary named UNICEF envoy

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Sir Edmund Hillary, one of the first two men to climb Mt. Everest, was named special representative for the children of the Himalayas by the United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF. The New Zealand-born explorer, 71, together with his Sherpa guide from Nepal, Tenzing Norgay, conquered Mt. Everest in 1953.

Since his first climbing expedition to the Himalayas in 1951, Sir Edmund has helped establish 26 primary schools in a district in Nepal where some 3,000 pupils have been enrolled. He has also been instrumental in building hospitals, bridges, water supply pipelines and airstrips for the people in the region. Sir Edmund said in a news conference Friday he will continue his work of more than 30 years to benefit the lives of children in the Himalayas.

UNICEF officials say Nepal, one of the world's poorest nations, has a literacy rate of only 35 per cent.

French actor denies he took part in rapes

PARIS (AP) — French actor Gerard Depardieu has denied a recent magazine report that he took part in rapes, saying he "respects women too much." The French movie star made the denial in the French newspaper Le Monde, which suggested Depardieu might boycott the U.S. Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles Monday. Depardieu starred in Cyrano De Bergerac, which has been nominated for five Oscars including best foreign film. The actor was quoted in the Feb. 25 issue of the U.S. news magazine Time as saying he had taken part in many rapes, the first when he was nine years old. "It was all absolutely normal in those circumstances." He was quoted by the magazine as saying. "That all makes me laugh. That was part of my childhood." But Depardieu, one of France's most successful actors and considered by many as its best, told Le Monde: "I categorically deny the comment attributed to me in Time magazine concerning a 'rape' that I committed when I was nine."

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